

Planning Support Methods: Urban and Regional Analysis and Projection, Richard E. Klosterman, Kerry Brooks, Joshua Drucker, Edward Feser and Henry Renski, *Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018, 320 pp, £47.95, ISBN 978144222 0294*

Planning developed as a social science with the advance of quantitative methods in geography in the 1960s. The dominance of quantitative methods led Andrew Isserman – a demographer not averse to quantitative methods – to warn about over-reliance on data and instead to ‘dare to plan’ (Isserman, 1985). Since then we have seen the communicative turn in planning, and quantitative methods have somewhat lost importance, which is reflected in the scarcity of textbooks on the subject. In planning practice, however, ‘numbers’ remain important day-to-day business for planners as plans are required to be increasingly evidence-based. *Planning Support Methods* by Richard Klosterman and colleagues is therefore a welcome addition.

The book concentrates on planning methods in the sense of planning support systems, which are defined as specialised tools that support planners in making assumptions about the future based on existing data (8). Acknowledging the complexity and data requirements of state-of-the-art models, the authors explicitly focus on simple methods that are accessible and useful. The ambition is not to educate planners to become expert modellers, but to understand the basic processes of modelling: ‘experience suggests that the ability to incorporate local knowledge and up-to-date contextual assumptions is often more important than methodological sophistication in projecting the future’ (10). This is also where the book differs from other methods textbooks, as it aims to be accessible and useful for communities in discussing possible futures.

Planning Support Methods is a textbook for planning students which is primarily intended for the US market, but it is equally suitable for any other country as the data used are relatively simple and widely available. It is an updated and extended version of Klosterman’s *Community Analysis and Planning Techniques*, published in 1990. Throughout the book the authors use the city of Decatur in DeKalb County in Georgia, which is introduced in Chapter 2. As such, the section is not very relevant in terms of content, but it familiarises the reader with the context and provides a useful template for a teaching session.

The remainder of the book consists of chapters that focus on specific planning methods and/or policy sectors. Chapters 3 and 4 outline key ideas of trend and share projection methods; in the former the future is projected in isolation from other units, whereas in the latter projections are driven by the context within which an area is located. It also introduces the basic terminology and concepts used in subsequent chapters, which focus on population and the economy. Chapter 5 mainly outlines the cohort-component methods and its constituent elements (mortality, fertility and migration). It would have been helpful if it had also included a discussion of the role of households, which are equally, if not more, important for planning. Chapter 6 on economic analysis focuses on both industries and the workforce. The main methods introduced are location quotients and shift-share analysis, including projections. The next two chapters focus on spatial analysis and the way we can use these techniques for planning purposes, in particular the identification of development sites. All chapters fortunately include a ‘health warning’ outlining the strengths and, in particular, weaknesses of each method. The final chapter,

instead of being a conclusion, [94] advises on presentation techniques and how to apply different planning methods in practice.

Having taught planning methods at the University of Liverpool myself, I wish this book had been published when I took over this course in 2014. Not only does the book provide a clear structure for a lecture cycle, including exercise, but also the website <https://planning-support.org> provides ample online resources such as Excel workbooks, PowerPoint presentations, exercises (still to come) and additional readings. Decatur and DeKalb could be easily replaced by any other town or region for teaching purposes, allowing students to engage in the discussion of a place they know. Students are generally less keen engaging with modules teaching numeracy skills, yet these remain one of the most valued skills in planning practice. This book should help students to better understand and appreciate the value of numbers in planning and support teachers of planning methods.

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References

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